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Interview with GraceAnne DeCandido

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Interview with GraceAnne DeCandido

Editor, Wilson Library Bulletin

by Katina Strauch (College of Charleston)

On May 15, 1995, *The H.W. Wilson Company* announced that the *Wilson Library Bulletin* would cease publication. We spoke with GraceAnne DeCandido about this decision the next day. — KS

ATG: Effective with the June 1995 issue, we have learned that the *Wilson Library Bulletin* will cease publication. GraceAnne, this is unbelievable. I am so upset. This is like the death of a family member. What happened? What are you going to do?

GAD: My job for the immediate future is to be WebWizard for the H. W. Wilson World Wide Web Home Page, nurture the gopher hole, and investigate the possibilities for an online library magazine. What happened is years of steadily declining circulation, combined with rising paper and postage costs. *H. W. Wilson* is not a magazine publisher, and it was clear that the kind of attention that might have kept *WLB* going was not feasible.

ATG: *WLB* started as a house organ in 1914. I believe that it was printed on the in-house Web press before it became a formal-looking — four-color, coated paper, permanent binding — magazine. Why

not cut production or operating costs rather than completely stop publication of the magazine?

GAD: To have a magazine grow to full color and glossy format makes it virtually impossible to go back to a less engaging format.

ATG: In the press release, *H.W. Wilson's* CEO Frank Miller says that *WLB* was faced with decreasing circulation over the past decade, diminished advertising revenues, rising paper and postage costs and that is no longer economically feasible to continue publication in print. Did *WLB* ever make money?

GAD: Our circulation has been declining since 1970, and I do not believe the magazine was ever a profit center for the company.

ATG: You have alluded to the possibility of "cyberpublication of an online magazine." What can you tell us about plans for that type of vehicle? If the readership for paper was declining, do you think that it will increase for an electronic journal? Is this an economically feasible alternative? What are the types of things that you plan to take from the print version of the bulletin and publish in the electronic environment? How much money is the *H.W. Wilson* Com-


pany prepared to commit to this venture?

GAD: We are just beginning to explore the possibilities of online publication. Whatever we do, it will not be an online version of *WLB*, but a different online library magazine, with, I hope, some of the voices we have been honored to carry in the print *WLB*. We are trying to figure out if such a venture would be useful and commercially viable.

ATG: How many people work full and part time for *WLB* and what will happen to them? Will some people be kept on at the *H.W. Wilson* company? Are there comparable positions in the Company?

GAD: There are four other editors besides me, and our personnel department is working with the staff to try to find comparable positions for them.

ATG: What will happen to people/libraries who have subscribed to *WLB* for the calendar year of 1995? Will they get a refund?

GAD: The Marketing Department is working on some type of credit or refund for current subscribers. 

NB: GraceAnne DeCandido can be reached at <graceann@wlb.hwwilsoncom> — KS

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also help identify patterns of use and compare costs with comparable services if desirable, and also with charging back to patrons if necessary. Even if we negotiate flat rates for services, we need some means of monitoring whether what we are paying for is a good deal.

The topic of negotiation brings us back

to the marriage of art and business in librarianship. Negotiation requires skills in using and understanding numbers, but also in assessing and interacting with people. Not all aspects of librarianship can be treated with cold hard statistics. Interactions with people will remain a major part of what we do, either in offering services or negotiating

for them. As times change, part of what will guide us is our instincts and things that cannot be measured or even always understood and agreed upon. The art has to remain, but we must also be prepared to back up our services with an understanding of numbers and costs of doing our business. 